Buddhist Counseling: Implications for Mental Health Professionals

George Lee, Ph.D., Alice Oh, B.A.,
Thomas Diaz, B.A., Venerable Chenzi
Buddhist Counseling: Theory and Practice

Kin Cheung (George) Lee, Ph.D.
California School of Professional Psychology, Hong Kong
Statement of Problem

Some mental health professionals regarded the current western mindfulness as a reductionist approach which has a possible reduction in effectiveness (Huxter, 2007), a superficial calming technique which may not bring lasting changes (Neale, 2011), and a probable abandonment of the transformative potential in Buddhist mindfulness (Sun, 2014).

A number of scholars have recommended that practitioners and researchers acquire a foundation in Buddhist teachings and an understanding of the Buddhist rationale for mindfulness in order to deliver effective BDIs to clients (Lee et al., 2016; McWilliam, 2011; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2014).

Many contemporary psychotherapies may not incorporate the essence of Buddhist principles and theories, and some scholars showed concerns for this approach to potentially cause harm to clients who use the practices inappropriately (Neale, 2011; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2013). A traditional Buddhist approach to psychological healing may promote more lasting positive changes (Neale, 2011), cultivate a different, keener, wiser kind of attention (Hyland, 2011), and provide more interventions that help mental health professionals to better address the needs of different clients (Lee et al., 2016), or potentially cause harm to clients who use the practices inappropriately (Neale, 2011; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2013).

Some mental health professionals regarded the current western mindfulness as a reductionist approach which has a possible reduction in effectiveness (Huxter, 2007).
What is Buddhist Counseling?

Buddhist counseling is a process of reducing suffering in individuals using teachings and interventions from Buddhism, which aims to train the human mind to attain a state of equanimity, joy, and liberation. Using teachings and interventions from Buddhism, which simulatons meditative practice, reading Buddhist scriptures, introspection to alleviate suffering.

The primary focus of Buddhist counseling is the facilitation of self-cultivation for clients, thereby guiding them develop skillful means to cultivate for clients, thereby guiding them develop skillful means to alleviate suffering. The level of cultivation of the Buddhist counselor is highly important.

In a psychological language, Buddhist counseling is a process of reducing suffering in individuals.

There can be a variety of interventions such as mindfull listening, giving advice based on Buddhist teachings, chanting, mindfulness and meditation practice, reading Buddhist scriptures, introspection to alleviate suffering. The level of cultivation of the Buddhist counselor is highly important.

The primary focus of Buddhist counseling is the facilitation of self-cultivation for clients, thereby guiding them develop skillful means to alleviate suffering. The level of cultivation of the Buddhist counselor is highly important.

In a psychological language, Buddhist counseling is a process of reducing suffering in individuals.

What is Buddhist Counseling?
Continuous
Permanence
Independent
Dhamma:
Impermanence
Discontinuity
Dependent Co-arising
Dukkha

— SN 56.11

Dukkha,

"Birth is dukkha; death is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are dukkha; "association with the unbeloved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are dukkha."

Pathology = rigidity in negotiating between person and reality

Self
Independent Permanence
Dependent Co-arising
Impermanence
Discontinuity
Dependent Co-arising
Dhamma:
The Two Arrows Paradigm of Suffering

1. Nomena
   • Physical Pain
   • Unavoidable events in life such as birth, sickness, and death

2. Phenomenon
   • Attachment
   • Resistance
   • Avoidance
   • Mental proliferation (Self)

The Two Arrows Paradigm of Suffering (Dhamma)
Buddhist Psychological Conceptualization of Human Beings

- Ethics
- Psychology
- Parapsychology
- Environment
- Body
- Karma

Self

Buddhist Psychological Conceptualization of Human Beings
Goals

Alleviation of Emotional Suffering (Only the second arrow) by Training the Mind:

- Increase concentration of the mind so that one can achieve insights on:
  - How the self functions (Bodily feeling → perception → mental formation).
  - Increase understanding and acceptance of the phenomenon in life.
  - Dissolve desire and attachments to self and others.

Common Examples of Interventions:

- Direct feedback and guidance in practice.
- Teaching of Buddhist Knowledge.
- Compassion.
- Deep Listening and Empathy.

Treatment goals and Interventions in Buddhist Counseling:
Model of Buddhist Counseling

- Most Buddhist counselors have their teachers and some clients became students of the counselor or other masters.
- Personal practice to continue spiritual formation.
- Giving advice.
- Education on Buddhist teachings.
- Meditation/Mindfulness.
- Use metaphors and stories.
- Chanting/mantra.
- Rituals e.g. repentance.
- Good deeds.
- Mindful listening.
- Asking questions.
- May use other basic counseling skills based on the training of the counselor.

Teacher-Student Relationship:
- Teacher: Counseling for Cultivation-Self.
- Student: Engagement.

Techniques and Practices:
- Repentance.
- Mindfulness/Meditation.
- Chanting/Mantra.
- Mindful listening.
- Asking questions.
- May use other basic counseling skills based on the training of the counselor.
Precepts (All Buddhist Traditions)

- Protect self and others.
- Facilitate concentration
- Stop generation of negative Kamma.
- Protect self and others.
Chanting (Chinese Buddhism)

- Transfer Merits
- Learning Dhamma
- Mindfulness
- Chanting (Chinese Buddhism)
Reverential bowing (Most Buddhist Traditions)

- Generate merits
- Challenging the idea of self
- Mindfulness

(Most Buddhist bowing Reverential)
First Noble Truth: Right View

What is right view? Knowledge of suffering (dukkhe űnañ), knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering, knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called right view. [SN 45.8]
Western Mindfulness vs. Buddhist Mindfulness
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WESTERN AND BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS

ALICE OH
CURRENT CONCERNS

• Miles Neale, a Buddhist psychotherapist and meditation teacher, coined the term, "McMindfulness." (Neale, 2011)

• Western mindfulness is a compartmentalized, secularized, watered-down version of meditation for the masses, drive-through style, stripped of its essential ingredients, prepacked and neatly stockpiled on the shelves of the commercial self-help supermarkets (Fisher, 2010).

• Western mindfulness provides temporary states of calm and peace, when proper practice offers much more (Neale, 2011; Purser & Loy, 2013).

• Western mindfulness may facilitate suffering by reinforcing greed, ill will, and delusion (Purser & Loy, 2013).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From a Buddhist Perspective</th>
<th>From a Western Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEFINITION OF MINDFULNESS</strong></td>
<td><strong>DEFINITION OF MINDFULNESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• REMEMBER IN THE PRESENT MOMENT (Anālayo, 2016)</td>
<td>• REMEMBER IN THE PRESENT MOMENT (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ENHANCE MEMORY STORAGE AND RECOLLECTION</td>
<td>• ENHANCE MEMORY STORAGE AND RECOLLECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mindfulness and Memory:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mindfulness and Memory:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;PAYING ATTENTION IN A PARTICULAR WAY: ON PURPOSE, IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, AND NON-JUDGMENTAL&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;PAYING ATTENTION IN A PARTICULAR WAY: ON PURPOSE, IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, AND NON-JUDGMENTAL&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;A KIND OF NONELABORATIVE, NON-JUDGMENTAL,&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;A KIND OF NONELABORATIVE, NON-JUDGMENTAL,&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;MINDFULNESS AND MEMORY: REMEMBERS AND RECOLLECTS WHAT WAS DONE AND SAID&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;MINDFULNESS AND MEMORY: REMEMBERS AND RECOLLECTS WHAT WAS DONE AND SAID&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SATI = MEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE</td>
<td>• SATI = MEMORY AND REMEMBRANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;AND WHAT, MONKS, IS THE FACULTY OF MINDFULNESS?&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PURPOSE OF MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Mindfulness</th>
<th>Buddhist Mindfulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To reduce negative physical and psychological symptoms (Chiesa &amp; Malinowski, 2011)</td>
<td>To strengthen and expand one's mental capacity of observing the moment by moment experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reduce negative physical and psychological symptoms (Chiesa &amp; Malinowski, 2011)</td>
<td>To attain nirvana (Sun, 2011; Purser 8 Loy, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reduce negative physical and psychological symptoms (Chiesa &amp; Malinowski, 2011)</td>
<td>To achieve personal gains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Monks, this is the one-way path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the passing away of pain and displeasure, for the achievement of the method, for the realization of nibbana, that is, the four establishments of mindfulness. (Digha Nikaya, 22.1 as quoted in Bodhi, 2011, 21)

To attain nirvana (Nilsson & Kazemi, 2016)
**Western Mindfulness**

- Focuses on awareness training, such as relaxing, focusing on the breath, recognizing thoughts and emotions with a nonjudgmental attitude (Fisher, 2010)
- Focuses on living in the present moment (Dhiman, 2008)
- Mindfulness should be practiced "on and off the cushion" (Rosen, 2015)
- Practice is comprehensive—trains mind to pay attention in a nonjudgmental attitude (Lee, 2017)
- Buddhist Mindfulness exercises include:
  - Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest
  - Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body
  - Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body
  - Walking meditation: observe external and internal environments while taking slow, deliberate steps
  - Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating

**Buddhist Mindfulness**

- Focus on the breath while contemplating on dharmas
- Teach the practitioner to recognize feelings without reacting to them with desire or aversion (Analayo, 2016)
- Mindfulness exercises include:
  - Satipatthana Sutta (The Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness)
  - Anapanasati Sutta (The Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing)
  - Kayagata-Sati Sutta (The Discourse on the Mindfulness Regarding the Body)
  - Teach the practitioner to recognize feelings without reacting to them with desire or aversion (Analayo, 2016)
  - Buddhist Mindfulness exercises include:
    - Mindfulness: bring awareness to one's action of eating
    - Walking meditation: observe external and internal environments while taking slow, deliberate steps
    - Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body
    - Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating and drinking
    - Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest
    - Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body
  - Buddhist Mindfulness exercises include:
    - Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest
    - Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body
    - Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body
    - Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating

**Practice of Mindfulness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddhist Mindfulness</th>
<th>Western Mindfulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest</td>
<td>• Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body</td>
<td>• Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body</td>
<td>• Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating and drinking</td>
<td>• Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating and drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest</td>
<td>• Raisin experience: regulate attention and explore a single raisin with curiosity and interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body</td>
<td>• Body scan: gradual sweep of attention through entire body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body</td>
<td>• Breath meditation: attend to the present moment, focus on the breath, and expand awareness to the whole body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating and drinking</td>
<td>• Mindful eating: bring awareness to one's action of eating and drinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Analayo, 2016)
(Fisher, 2010)
(Dhiman, 2008)
(Lee, 2017)
(Rosen, 2015)
(Fisher, 2010)
THREEFOLD TRAINING (SIKKHA)

• Mindfulness training without wisdom and ethics only produces temporary states of calmness and tranquility (Neale, 2011).

• In Buddhism, mindfulness is practiced together with the development of wisdom and ethics (Kang & Whittingham, 2010).

Meditation (Samadhi)
Wisdom (Prajna)
Ethics (Shila)
### Mindfulness

Mindfulness is not ethically neutral since there are proper and improper forms of practice, and a distinction must be made between wholesome and unwholesome qualities to decide which to cultivate (Chiesa, 2013).

- **Samma sati** (right mindfulness)
  
  "And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself, and what is to be abandoned to generate right discernment, and judgment of what is to be cultivated. Wisdom clarifies perception of reality and acts as ethical guide (Kang & Whittingham, 2010)."

- **Wisdom (prajña)**
  
  "Wisdom (prajña) is knowledge of the nature of the self and the world (impermanence, relativity, and independence), and ways everything function and interacts with the world. This is the case and what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself, and what is to be abandoned to generate right discernment, and judgment of what is to be cultivated. Wisdom clarifies perception of reality and acts as ethical guide (Kang & Whittingham, 2010)."

### Wisdom

- **Wisdom (prajña)**
  
  "Wisdom (prajña) is knowledge of the nature of the self and the world (impermanence, relativity, and independence), and ways everything function and interacts with the world. This is the case and what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself, and what is to be abandoned to generate right discernment, and judgment of what is to be cultivated. Wisdom clarifies perception of reality and acts as ethical guide (Kang & Whittingham, 2010)."

### Ethics

- **Ethics (Dharma)**
  
  "Ethics (Dharma) is the path to the end of suffering. This path includes the Five Precepts as the basic moral guidelines, and the Eightfold Path as a deeper guide to achieving enlightenment (Sangharakshita, 2013)."
CONCLUSION

• Mindfulness from a Buddhist approach is more comprehensive compared to western mindfulness since the practice focuses on contemplating on body, feelings, mind, dhammas, and wisdom. Compared to western mindfulness, since the practice focuses on understanding the dhammas, especially in relation to impermanence, interdependence, non-attachment, acceptance, and letting be, and letting go, mindfulness will remain only one tree in a forest of skillful practices when it is actually much more.

“Without understanding the dhammas, especially in relation to impermanence, interdependence, non-attachment, acceptance, and letting be, and letting go, mindfulness will remain only one tree in a forest of skillful practices when it is actually much more” (Khong, 2009)

• (Prajna (prajna) and ethics (shila) are integrated in the practice. Mindfulness from a Buddhist approach is more comprehensive.

(Shila) and ethics (shila) are integrated in the practice. Mindfulness from a Buddhist approach is more comprehensive.
REFERENCES


References
COMPASSION: A BUDDHIST COUNSELING INTERVENTION.

Presenter: Thomas A Diaz, B.A
University of The West
Rosemead, CA
PURPOSE

To demonstrate the differences of Self-Compassion, a popular Western intervention compared with Buddhist concepts of cultivating compassion for others.
Compassion can be defined as an altruistic behavior, emotion, or virtue that creates the reduction of suffering of one's self and others (Blum, 1980). The most common experiences with compassion (Hyung et al., 2016), especially in western culture's, is verbal support, deep listening, and tangible offerings (i.e., money, hugs, gifts).
COMMON EXPERIENCES WITH WESTERN COMPASSION

- Trust
- Patience
- Non-judgment
- Acceptance
In Western psychology, compassion is viewed as the essence of self-esteem. When you have compassion for yourself, you understand and accept yourself just as you are (Engel, 2006, p. 134).

Self-compassion consists of three main elements:

- Mindfulness
- A Sense of Common Humanity
- Kindness

Compassion is seen as a well-functional tool in professional psychology and is adaptable into different sectors of psychotherapy [Lee, 2016].

Buddhism and Cultivation... CONT.
In the context of Buddhist understanding of compassion, compassion is generally referred to as the original concept of Karuná—a virtue of having a selfless intent to provide sympathetic care to all sentient beings and liberate them from suffering (Lee, 2016). Looking at Mahayana Buddhism, the ultimate use of compassion is for the actual practitioner to become their own Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva is motivated by the use of great compassion—cultivates towards the six Paramitas (Williams, 2008). In the context of Buddhism, understanding of compassion, compassion towards the six Paramitas is motivated by the use of great compassion. This is for the actual practitioner to become their own Bodhisattva. This is for the actual practitioner to become their own Bodhisattva.
SIX PÁRAMITÁS

Patience
- Tolerance/Forbearance
- Being aware intentions/Mind & Heart

Ethics
- Self-discipline
- Not causing harm to others

Generosity
- Unconditional Love/Selfless Welfare of all beings

Concentration
- Practice of mindfulness to train the mind.
- Energy/enthusiasm motivations

Wisdom
- Extinguishing afflictions
- Defilements

Vigor
- Energy/enthusiasm motivations

Self-discipline
- Not causing harm to others
The most important practice of a Bodhisattva is having the highest aspiration to freeing all beings from sufferings, regardless of challenges or barriers (Chihmann, 2000).

Therefore, compassion in this manner is undifferentiated, unconditional, unlimited, unwavering for all beings. It is the true essence of motivating a Bodhisattva.

A fundamental direction of Buddhist compassion is the focus on others which leads practitioners to shift the focus on oneself to the benefit of others (William, 2008).

The most important practice of a Bodhisattva is having the highest aspiration to freeing all beings from sufferings, regardless of challenges or barriers (Chihmann, 2000).
Compassion is a selfless intention to alleviate pain and suffering in others. Compassion includes a sense of understanding others, a sense of empathy to see and feel the suffering of others. Compassion is directed towards all beings in an undifferentiated way.
Compassion

Recognizing suffering.

Understanding the universality of human suffering.

Feeling for the person of suffering.

Tolerating uncomfortable feelings.

Having motivation to act/acting to alleviate suffering.

As both, a psychological and Buddhist movement, the use of compassion provides interventions which install enhancements towards life.

With consistent practice, compassion becomes a daily experience and enhances one's awakening journey.

In a modern approach, clinicians have opportunities to experience compassion through the form of connection and self-cultivation. With many available experiences such as meditation, yoga, or other form of mindfulness practices, the ability to create a foundation in these practices are practical.

Compassion can influence how we promote towards life. Interventions which install enhancements movement, the use of compassion provides As both, a psychological and Buddhist

BRIDGING TWO EXPERIENCES (16)
THANK YOU

(Santorelli, 2014)
Feature, outfit

Dalai, Shaolin

Myth: Orphan?

Traditions

China, Korea, Japan

MahaYana
18 year-old

To take practices in daily life

Full ordination this fall

Environment: Right track

Precepts: significant to remain monkhood.
Precept (Discipline)

Calmness (Mindfulness)

Wisdom

THREE Pillars of Practice
- Facilitate concentration
- Negative kamma
- Stop generation of
- Protect self and others.

Choose Kind
or
Being Right

When given the
choice between
(All Buddhist
Precepts)

VINAYA
1. I undertake the training rule to abstain from killing.
2. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not given.
3. I undertake the training rule to avoid sexual misconduct.
4. I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech.
5. I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented drink that causes heedlessness.

Five Precepts

Cloud the mind.

Unwholesome speech.

Unroyal to relationship.

Untruthful.

Unroyal to relationship.
Killing with mindfulness?

Being mindful to not even hurting other beings (you won't even have a chance to put yourself in a position to kill others)?

DIFFERENCES: WESTERN MINDFULNESS
Posture
Daily routine
Monk rule: Monkhood Guide Book
Buddhism list out the rules
Rule: Protection

Dignity Manner / Behavior
Discipline
Following the rule, knowing the rule, and self-observation, especially in different stimulation.

Example: Playing basketball game, with rule and no rule.

Discipline helps to straighten mindfulness and mindfulness itself also helping to keep the rule.
Meditate on the thoughts

- Have you committed or feel like committing a wrong doing? Why?